Principles of Ethical Storytelling and Messaging

At Communities In Schools of Central Texas, the following principles guide our use of imagery, storytelling, and messaging:

- We believe greatness exists in every child. We will tell stories that involve students and their families actively participating in solutions.
- Our storytelling honors the experiences of the students and families we serve, and helps us garner support from partners and funders.
- We will be ethical in the use of images, stories, and messaging to evoke solidarity, connection, shared values, and to deepen understanding.
- Our stories will focus on potential, and demonstrate the positive qualities of those being portrayed.
- Our stories will educate and help aid in understanding of systemic challenges faced by young people and their families.
- We will avoid language that implies that we are "fixing" or "saving" students and families. We are working to break down immediate and systemic barriers to create and sustain equitable outcomes.
- We will use images and stories that exhibit empathy at the core: treating people the way they want to be treated.
- Our images and stories will avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes or evoking feelings of pity, and will avoid oversimplifying challenges.
- We will receive input from students and families when telling their stories, and we will use their own words as often as possible. We will put students at the center of our communications.
- We will use imagery and storytelling that showcases diversity.
- No one will lose access to resources or programs for not participating in storytelling, photography and video projects.
- We will avoid language that is labeling, like *poor or homeless,* in our storytelling and fundraising appeals.
- When sharing stories of our students, rather than saying "at-risk youth" we will use "all students" - Communities In Schools empowers *all students* to stay in school and on a path to graduation.

Our Core Narrative:

- Communities In Schools exists to support individual student potential.
- A healthy relationship with a caring adult helps build student resilience and achievement.
- We work directly inside schools to spot and overcome the roadblocks in our students' way.
- We start by collaborating with school districts and schools to understand student and community needs, and we deliver resources tailored to each school community.
- We go beyond the classroom to work with local businesses, social service agencies, healthcare providers and volunteers, to give every student the support they need to overcome immediate and systemic barriers in order to succeed in school and in life.
- Communities In Schools students stay in school, graduate and go on to bright futures.
- By helping all students stay in school and succeed in life, we are building stronger, healthier and more economically stable communities where every person is capable of reaching their greatest potential.